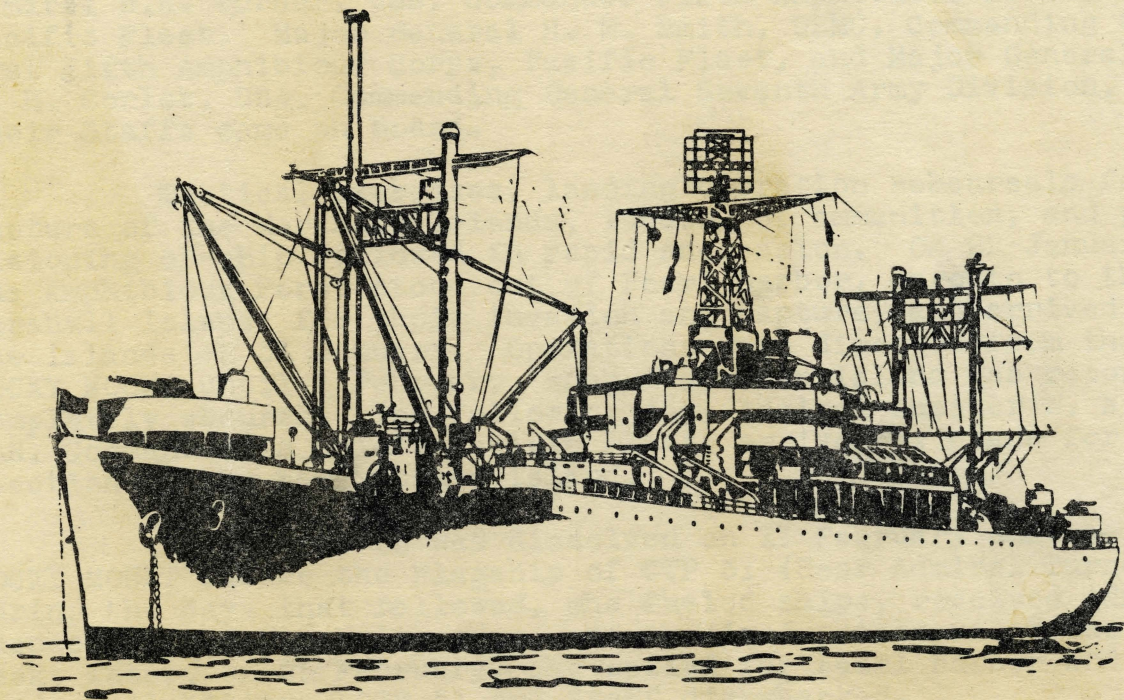


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# HISTORY OF THE U.S.S. ROCKY MOUNT AGC-3





HISTORY  
of the  
U.S.S. ROCKY MOUNT (AGC-3)

The U.S.S. ROCKY MOUNT, named for the Rocky Mountains, was converted from a C-2 Maritime Commission merchant ship by the Bethlehem Steel Company at Hoboken, New Jersey, and commissioned there on 15 October 1943. Captain Stanley F. Patten, USN, was her first Commanding Officer.

After a short shakedown cruise and an inspection by the Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet, she sailed for Pearl Harbor, via the Panama Canal, arriving at her destination on 27 December.

At Pearl Harbor, she received several more inspections, both formal and informal. An intensive training period until 10 January 1944 followed. On that date, she became Flagship of Rear Admiral R.K. Turner, USN, Commander Fifth Amphibious Force, Pacific Fleet. Major General H. M. Smith, USMC, Commanding General Fifth Amphibious Corps, Pacific Fleet, and Major General C. H. Corlet, USA, Commanding General Seventh Army Division, and their Staffs came on board.

Tactical exercises, landing operation rehearsals for the capture of the Marshall Islands, loading of ammunition, and provisioning of ship followed in rapid succession. On 22 January, the Amphibious Force stood out of Pearl Harbor, enroute to the Marshall Islands for their invasion and capture, and arrived off the islands on 31 January. Operations were directed from the ROCKY MOUNT until 4 February, when Kwajalein Island was reported completely secured. The following day, Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, USN, Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet, arrived by plane for inspection of the newly taken island.

Task Force 52 was dissolved on 11 February and the ROCKY MOUNT became the Flagship of CTF 51 (Rear Admiral Turner). During the days that followed, she fueled ships, received Admirals inspecting the Marshalls area, and received prisoners of war. Two weeks later, on 25 February, she sailed for Pearl Harbor and Navy Yard availability. CTF 51 and Staff disembarked.

On 12 May, Vice Admiral R.K. Turner, USN, now Commander Fifth Amphibious Force and Amphibious Forces, Pacific, came on board with his Staff for a second time. Lieutenant General H. M. Smith, USMC, Commander Fifth Amphibious Corps, also transferred his headquarters and Staff to the ROCKY MOUNT.



On 29 May, the ship got underway for the Mariannas Islands for the assault and capture of those islands. The trip was long, with the usual submarine reports and encounters. Several rafts were sighted with about 12 Japanese who refused to be rescued. They were left in the water. The ROCKY MOUNT reached Saipan on 15 June, the day the attack was scheduled to begin.

Initial landings were made under heavy mortar and rifle fire, and many wounded were brought aboard for medical attention. Enemy air attack was constant and heavy throughout the operation, and while ships all around were either hit or under direct attack, the ROCKY MOUNT came through untouched. Casualties were brought on board and were cared for by the medical officers. Calls for blood donors from the officers and men, both ship and staff, received overwhelming response.

Organized resistance on Saipan ceased after 24 days. In the days that followed, prisoners were brought aboard for medical treatment and questioning. G. R. Tweed, CRM, USN, came on board after thirty months of isolation on Guam.

On 20 July, CTF 51 in ROCKY MOUNT with Task Unit 52.18.18, got underway and proceeded to Guam for the assault and capture of that island. Beaches were secured quickly and four days later the ship departed from Guam for the assault and capture of Tinian Island. When these operations were completed the ROCKY MOUNT returned to Saipan. Routine for several days following consisted of shifting from island to island of the Mariannas Group. On 15 August, the ship once more set sail for Pearl Harbor, arriving there on 26 August.

Back in Pearl Harbor, Vice Admiral Turner hauled down his flag and Rear Admiral Forrest B. Royal, USN, Commander Amphibious Group Six, came on board and broke his flag. Rehearsals for the next operation and a short Navy Yard availability period followed until 11 September.

On 15 September the ship sailed for Manus in company with TG 33.2. ~~Neptune~~ ceremonies on crossing the Equator broke the tension of operations and invasion preparations. On 14 October, the ROCKY MOUNT, now Flagship of CTG 79.2, left Manus for the assault and capture of Leyte, Philippine Islands. Six days later she reached Leyte and anchored in the transport area.

The ROCKY MOUNT participated in shore bombardment the following day. Expending 202 five inch shells against targets such as pill boxes, observation posts, and personnel shelters, the ship definitely demolished one pill box and temporarily silenced enemy mortar fire which had opened on our beached LST's and had hit five. Enemy air attack was continuous throughout the operation.



Upon completion of her assignment at Leyte on 24 October, the ship sailed to Hollandia, Dutch New Guinea. After five days of tactical maneuvers and general drills and inspections in preparation for change of command, Captain Fred A. Hardesty, USN, relieved Captain Stanley F. Patten, USN, as Commanding Officer. Before leaving, Captain Patten presented Purple Heart Medals to two of the ship's company for wounds received at Leyte.

Major General Rapp Brush, USA, Commanding General 40th Infantry Division, set up his headquarters on board the ship on 9 December. The ROCKY MOUNT operated in the Admiralty Islands and New Guinea, observing landing operations, undergoing gunnery practices and drills.

On 6 January 1945, the ship returned to the Philippines to participate in the Lingayen operation. The route followed was within fighter range of many enemy held airstrips and islands, and the formation was under frequent air attack and constant aerial observation. Major General Brush moved his Staff to shore headquarters on 9 January.

After the ROCKY MOUNT had acted as Flagship, Lingayen Area Control Group and SOPA (Administrative) for almost five weeks, on 20 February she departed for Leyte via Subic Bay and Mindoro Island in company with two Australian men-of-war and two U.S. destroyers.

Following a brief rest at Leyte, on 5 March the ship took part in the rehearsals for the landings of the next operation. Two days later Lieutenant General R. L. Eichelberger, USA, Commanding General 8th Army, Brigadier General White, USA, Deputy Commander, 13th Air Force, and Major General J. A. Doe, USA, Commanding General 41st Infantry Division, came on board with their Staffs for transportation to the next assault objective. The ship got underway on 8 March for the landings on Zamboanga, Mindanao, P.I.

Observing and directing the assault landings, the ROCKY MOUNT anchored inside Santa Cruz Bank on 10 March. Initial opposition was scattered and slight. After the landings were effected, mortar fire directed at beached landing craft and ships off the beaches became quite heavy. Mortar positions were spotted by planes and silenced by ships assigned to shore bombardment. Shortly after noon, Major General Doe and his Staff left the ship to set up headquarters and take command on shore. Two weeks after the operation began, the ROCKY MOUNT left the assault area and departed for Subic Bay.

On 4 April Brigadier General L. Barham, Royal Australian Army, came on board for transportation, and the ship got underway for Morotai Island. At Morotai, all hands attended memorial services for the late President, Franklin D. Roosevelt. On 23 April, Brigadier General Whitehead and Staff, of the 26th Australian Infantry Division, embarked, and the ROCKY MOUNT, now in TG 78.1, got underway for assault landings on Tarakan Island, Borneo. When the objective was reached, landings were effected without incident.



However, during the shore bombardment a large ammunition dump blew up with an explosion so intense that ships in the transport area were shaken by the blast.

The ROCKY MOUNT, on 3 May, weighed anchor to return to Morotai Island. After a brief period of relaxation, preparations were begun for the next operation. On 3 June, Major General Wooten, Royal Australian Army, Commanding General 9th Australian Division, came on board with his Staff for the Brunei Bay operation.

At sea, enroute to Brunei Bay, the Commanding Officer held Commendatory Mast and presented Commendations to 8 officers and 36 men for outstanding performance of duty in radar navigation during the approach to Tarakan Island. The same day a destroyer came alongside with a patient suffering from an acute intestinal obstruction. Emergency medical operations while underway had become a common occurrence on board the ROCKY MOUNT.

The landing of assault troops was carried out after naval shore bombardment on 10 June. Major General Wooten and his Staff set up headquarters ashore. The operation at Brunei Bay was brief, and a week after the landings the ROCKY MOUNT was again underway for Leyte.

Early on the morning of 18 June, Rear Admiral Forrest B. Royal, USN, Commander Amphibious Group Six, was found dead in his cabin. He had died sometime during the midwatch from a heart attack. Memorial services were held that afternoon. The funeral took place two days later at Tacloban. Admiral T.C. Kinkaid, USN, Admiral W. F. Halsey, USN, Vice Admiral R.P. Kauffman, USN, and other senior officers attended the service.

The ROCKY MOUNT began an overhaul and conversion period at Leyte Gulf on 23 June, alongside the U.S.S. VULCAN.

On 6 August 1945, Captain Benjamin Katz, USN, relieved Captain Hardesty and assumed command of the ship.

Shortly after 2100 on 10 August, during the moving picture, the Domei News report that the Japanese Government had accepted the Potsdam Terms was received. The rest of the movies was shown to a somewhat inattentive audience, and then the ROCKY MOUNT joined other vessels in the harbor in a display of pyrotechnics and signal lights, accompanied by the din of whistles, sirens, and cheers. This lasted almost unabated until nearly midnight, the fireworks and men apparently having become exhausted.

On 15 August, the ship was detached from Commander Seventh Amphibious Force and reported to the Commander Amphibious Forces, Pacific Fleet. Five days later she reported to the Commander Seventh Fleet for duty as his Flagship. On 1 September,



after a post-repair trial in Leyte Gulf, she proceeded to Manila to embark part of the Seventh Fleet Staff, after which the ROCKY MOUNT proceeded to Jinsen, Korea. There, on 10 September, Admiral Thomas C. Kinkaid, USN, Commander Seventh Fleet, came on board and broke his flag.

The next day the ROCKY MOUNT was underway across the Yellow Sea to the Yangtze River. She anchored off the mouth of that river on 15 September until minesweepers had swept the channel to Shanghai. However, to avoid a typhoon, the ship hurriedly put to sea and after three days of riding heavy seas, again anchored off the mouth of the Yangtze.

On 19 September, the ROCKY MOUNT led the U.S. and Allied ships, the first Allied ship in four years to make the passage up the Yangtze and Whangpoo Rivers, and moored at buoys in the Whangpoo opposite the Shanghai Bund. The shores were lined with crowds who cheered, waved flags, and exploded fire crackers. Whistles blew and the noise was deafening as the ROCKY MOUNT led the Fleet back to Shanghai.

Thus ends the World War II fighting career of the U.S.S. ROCKY MOUNT, third of the Auxiliary General Communications class ships. From the time when she arrived at Pearl Harbor, on 27 December 1943, she never left the combat area of the Pacific. Although exposed to bombs, torpedoes, and shells, she came through all of her operations unscathed. Her record of continuous combatant service and nine amphibious operations justifies the claim of "THE ROCK" as the "Veteran Queen of the Amphibious Fleets."